

And in Virgil,—

‘Idem ter socios pura circumtulit unda
Spargens rore levi, et rano felix Olivæ.’

(Æneid vi. 230.)

These were employed in the service of the Devil; but in all the Lustrations prescribed in Scripture, in honour of the true God, the herb Hyssop was used. Consult Exodus xxiv., Leviticus xiv., Numbers xix., and the fuller explanation of St. Paul in the ninth chapter of the Hebrews:—

‘For, when every commandment of the law had been read by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people.’ (v. 19.)

The blood was mingled with water that the former may not be congealed, and that the mixture might be more easily sprinkled and diffused. The blood and the ashes of the red heifer mentioned in the lustrations of the ancient covenant, typified the precious Blood and Passion of Jesus Christ in the new, by the sprinkling of which purifying stream, our souls are saved from the destroying angel. Wool and hyssop, which, of their own nature, are capable of retaining water, like a sponge, were well adapted for this sacred rite, and moreover, had their own peculiar and beautiful signification. The wool, in its natural whiteness, denoted the spotless innocence of Jesus Christ, and it was made, as it were, *scarlet* wool, by our sins, which were the cause of His Passion, and the effusion of His Blood. Hyssop is one of the lowliest of all herbs, but at the same time, of a particularly warm flavour, denoting the humiliation of the God-Man in His Incarnation and most bitter sufferings.

Indeed Christ may be considered the true hyssop tied by charity to the cross—the hyssop which is fastened to the cedar wood by the purple woollen thread*. In the humiliation of His cross He

* “And the Lord spake to Moses and Aaron saying:

2 This is the observance of the victim which the Lord hath ordained. Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee a red cow of full age, in which there is no blemish, and which hath not carried the yoke:

3 And you shall deliver her to Eleazar the priest, * who shall bring her forth without the camp, and shall immolate her in the sight of all:

4 And dipping his finger in her blood, shall sprinkle it over-against the door of the tabernacle seven times,

* Heb. 13, 11.